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One Year Ago in Figure Four Weekly (#248) PLUS ordering info for newsletter and tapes by Bryan Alvarez

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One Year Ago in Figure Four Weekly  
March 27, 2000

Huge changes are expected in the WCW hierarchy shortly, probably by the time most of you postal subscribers read this. Brad Siegel has been pressured to turn things around, and nearly everybody expects big news at any time.

The talk at the Thunder tapings was that JJ Dillon and Gary Juster were purposely trying to make the company look as horrible as possible so Bill Busch would be fired and one of them could take his place. This is actually something that has been rumored for a long time but it seems more people picked up on it just recently. On Thursday, a false report circulated on the Internet that Busch had been reassigned and Dillon fired. Although there was no truth to the story, Busch ended up missing the pay-per-view Sunday and Dillon was running around in charge, which made a lot of people very nervous.

Busch has really fallen out of favor with many of the wrestlers lately who see him as a fairly nice guy who is totally clueless about wrestling and has no idea how to turn the company around. Others don't even consider him a nice guy. JJ Dillon is almost universally hated by the boys as well.

There were also strong rumors that Jerry Jarrett was going to be brought in to replace Busch. Jarrett was in for a meeting last week and was scheduled to talk with the company again. Sources indicate that they are interested in bringing him in as a consultant, similar to the role Jim Barnett currently plays, and not as a Vice President or head of the booking committee. He'd probably also be assigned to work with talent at the house shows. There have also been rumors going around for awhile that Eric Bischoff is going to be brought back in a management role. Bischoff is denying them like crazy, claiming he's currently moving to Scottsdale and attempting to get out of his WCW contract, although if he did come back this would not be the first time he has vigorously denied a true news story.

The feeling as of press time is that changes will likely go down when the final Uncensored buyrate comes in. Early indications are that the show may have drawn as low as a 0.12, which would be by far the lowest number in the history of either WWF or WCW.

There has also been strong speculation on the Internet recently that if things don't change, WCW might be sold. The truth is that a lot of people in the company are nervous about the

buyrates and ratings, but are certain that the company will never be sold as long as Ted Turner owns it. Most sources believe that Turner understands the cyclical nature of the business and realizes that things have been down before, but there is always the potential to turn things around and make big money. Keep in mind that WCW made more money in 1998 alone than all the money they lost in the decade leading up to it. However, if the proposed Time Warner merger goes through, Turner will have less authority than ever before and that could open the door to the company being sold. On the other hand, once the merger goes through the company will be worth well over 100 billion dollars which means WCW's losses will mean virtually nothing in the big picture. I suppose it should also be noted that Time Warner is folding LIFE Magazine, which is a much longer-running franchise and household name than WCW.

Foley, Michaels to wrestle again

I sure wish Mick Foley wasn't coming back.

I guess I should have known that nobody in wrestling really retires for real. But there was something about his statement that he wasn't like everyone else that really rang true.

The original plan was apparently for Foley to take one year off and then wrestle a big match at WrestleMania next year. As anybody familiar with wrestling knows, plans change. Foley ended up in the main event of this year's WrestleMania after an angle on Raw this past Monday night.

Although the pop in the Arena was huge, the feedback from readers and many fans on the Internet has been largely negative thus far. Many feel he damaged his reputation by saying all he had left was his word, and then going back on that. Foley has told friends that he truly thought he was retiring at No Way Out, but changed his mind when he realized that nobody really believed what he was saying. Mick would go to autograph sessions and find that nine out of ten people didn't believe he had really retired and was never coming back.

Jim Ross worked hard on Raw to bill this as a return for "one night only", but the feeling now is that Foley may be back and working regularly by this summer.

Shawn Michaels will also be wrestling what he's claiming is the final match of his career on the April 4th TWA show at the Far West Rodeo in San Antonio, TX. Justin Credible flew in for the TWA show on March 21st and challenged top heel Venom for the company's Heavyweight Title. Credible ended up getting the win, but claimed his schedule was too packed to allow him to defend the title regularly. Credible awarded the title to Michaels. Venom then got on the mic and challenged Shawn to a match. Shawn said he'd held enough titles in his career and was retired. Venom, who is the storyline owner of the TWA, offered to put his ownership on the line against Michaels' belt. Shawn said OK. If Michaels loses the match and the belt to Venom, it would be a symbolic sign that he's grown up and ready to leave for good, since he developed a reputation in the WWF for coming up with scenarios to avoid dropping titles.

Michaels, who hasn't wrestled since his match with Steve Austin at WrestleMania XIV, is taking a big risk to work a match on a small indy show before 500 to 700 fans. He still suffers from the effects of his recent back surgery and has become limited in what physical activities he can safely do. One would think that Michaels would work a safe match to ensure he didn't suffer another injury, but he's also the kind of guy who isn't content working half-speed.

Uncensored sucks

Uncensored was good for about one thing only. I finally figured out why WCW stipulation matches never get over with the fans.

The main event of the show ended up being the strap match with Hulk Hogan and Ric Flair. Midway through the match, Flair started dragging Hogan around so he could touch all four turnbuckle pads. Then he whipped out a pair of brass knuckles, punched Hogan, and made the cover. Mark Madden screamed that there were no pinfalls in a strap match. The referee was apparently unaware of this and dropped down to count. Hogan kicked out. Later, Hogan Hulked Up, hit the Big Boot and Legdrop of Doom, and started walking towards all four corners. Luger ran in for a second, but Hogan beat him up. Instead of touching the fourth corner, Hogan hit Flair with another legdrop and pinned him. Poor Mark Madden was sitting there looking like an idiot.

Last month in the Texas Death Match between Flair and Funk, the fans sat there wondering what the hell was going on when Flair made a pin and then struggled to make it to his feet by ten. The announcers did little to clear up the confusion.

The problem is this. Whoever is booking has this warped idea that fans instinctively know what the rules for these sometimes obscure matches are. They assume that everyone has seen a hundred different strap matches and a hundred different Texas Death matches and can recite the rules in their sleep. This is giving wrestling fans far too much credit. Bookers need to remember that many fans have only been tuning in for a few years, and may have never seen a strap match or Texas Death Match before in their lives.

The following motto should appear on all the booking sheets and on every wall in the WCW front office — WRESTLING FANS ARE STUPID. The bookers should even have T-shirts made with this logo on it. Now, before I go any further, I want to stress that I don't personally believe all wrestling fans really are stupid. But it is important to make your booking so clear that even the dumbest fan can figure it out.

For example, if WCW is going to book a strap match at Spring Stampede, they need to make it absolutely clear on every single TV show EXACTLY what the rules of the match are. They should appear on the screen, they should be spelled out by the wrestlers, and they should be spelled out by the announcers. This goes for ANY stipulation match whatsoever. I realize that there is a cage match on TV every week, but the rules should still be reiterated numerous times leading up to the bout. You'll notice that every WWF TV show starts out with a 20-minute

segment in which the participants say virtually nothing. What they do is they break everything down to its most basic form and repeat it over and over again so the fans totally understand it. When they booked the tables match between Dudleys and Rock on Smackdown, the announcers spent a ton of time making it very clear that Dudleys had to put Rock through one table to win, but he couldn't win unless he put both of them through different tables. Unlike WCW, they did not go under the assumption that fans automatically knew the rules going in.

WCW has been doing some sort of stupid stipulation match on almost every show and one or all of the following always happens: 1. The crowd doesn't react because they don't understand what is going on (an example would be Funk vs. Flair in the Texas Death Match). 2. The announcers don't understand the stipulations and look like total idiots (an example would be the Hogan vs. Flair strap match). 3. The company looks incompetent because the story of the match makes no sense (an example would be Three Count losing numerous hardcore matches but never losing the Hardcore Title).

All of this could be very easily fixed by simply explaining the rules of these matches in a simple manner that even the dumbest goof could understand. In addition to clearing up confusion for fans, it would also clear up any confusion the announcers would have.

With that said, let's talk about the crown jewel of gimmick match pay-per-views, Uncensored. The show was horrible, but everyone expected it to be horrible going in, so I guess if you bought it you got your money's worth. The lights were turned way down since nobody was in the building.

1. Artist beat Psicosis to retain the Cruiserweight Title. Chris Candido came out to do commentary. The announcers said "it's Chris Candido", going under the assumption that everyone at home knew who he was. Madden had to fix Candido's headset since the mic was pointing at the back of his head as he tried to speak. Match was bad and they missed lots of spots. Candido wanted to know where his valet was, although he never mentioned who she was. Paisley tried to interfere but Juvie kissed her. She beat on him and he sold like Ric Flair for Dusty Rhodes. Artist hit his diving DDT for the pinfall. \*

2. Demon & Norman Smiley d. Lane & Rave. Miss Hancock came out to do commentary for this match. Smiley was dressed up in his KISS outfit and Tony called them the "Screamin' Demons". Yes, that will get over great with the 18-34 young male demographic. Too much poorly executed choreography in this match. Norman applied the chicken wing on Rave for the tapout win. Horrible beyond belief. -\*

After the match, Lane and Rave tried to kidnap Hancock. Screamin' Demons made the save. They dragged her into the ring and everyone, including the referee, did the Big Wiggle. They'll give away strip-club calibre table dancing free on Nitro, but on pay-per-view they have the hot chick do the Big Wiggle. That'll send the young males home happy.

David made Daphne promise to stay backstage when they went out to attack Wall. She said OK. After they left, she revealed that her fingers had been crossed. Because this is WCW, this resulted in her keeping her word and not going out there.

3. Bam Bam Bigelow d. Wall—DQ. I guess this was the finish although it was never really made very clear. Wall's punches are so horrible. Bigelow is usually good at carrying big stiff to good matches, but this wasn't one of those times. They brawled through the crowd and Wall bodyslammed Bigelow through a table. The bell then rang and the match was over. Even though guys go through tables literally almost every day in wrestling, this time it resulted in Bigelow being stretchered out. DUD

After the match, Wall dragged Crowbar up onto the scaffold over the entrance. Crowd popped huge expecting a chokeslam fifteen feet down onto the ramp. I thought there was no way in hell this was going to happen since there wasn't a table or anything down there to break Crowbar's fall. I was wrong. Wall chokeslammed him and Crowbar fell down through the ramp. Luckily, it was heavily gimmicked and it looked like a safe bump. Still, when something like this must happen on every TV show and PPV, it becomes a sick waiting game before the tragedy. Crowbar was stretchered out and taken away in an ambulance. Tony did the most unconvincing job ever of trying to sell this like it was a real injury. Nobody in the crowd bought it either. Tony wondered if maybe the pay-per-view should be stopped. Then they cut right away to an interview with Gene Okerlund, who looked totally unconcerned.

4. Knobs beat Three Count to win the WCW Hardcore Title. Lots of craziness. Each member of Three Count dove onto Knobs from atop a ladder. Shane Helms, who has a legit broken nose, was pinned first. Crowd didn't understand the rules of a gauntlet match, so they popped thinking the match was over and then sat in confused silence when it continued. Evan took a scary Mike Awesome-style powerbomb over the top rope through a table to be eliminated. Shannon then pinned Knobs after Evan dropkicked him from behind, but Knobs' foot was on the bottom rope so they restarted the match. Knobs then got the pin with a garbage can-assisted splash. Bad. 1/4\*

5. Booker & Kidman d. Harlem Eat. Pig T remains horrendous. He even tried a tope over the guardrail onto Kidman at one point, but crashed and burned. Totally embarrassing. J Biggs did commentary and was actually pretty entertaining. Kidman pinned T with help from Booker. They celebrated like a happy team, which means one of them is turning for sure on Nitro. Horrible match, decent finish. Torrie was more gorgeous than ever, so I can't complain too much. 1/2\*

6. Vampiro d. Fit Finley in a Falls Count Anywhere Match. They spent some time in the ring before brawling into the crowd. They fought upstairs and almost went into the women's bathroom, but changed their minds and went into the men's. If you've seen one bathroom brawl, you've seen them all. Lighting was horrible when they brawled into the concession area. Vampiro finally hit his Michinoku Driver on the floor for the pinfall. Fans in the area went crazy since they were right there in the action. Match was pretty good and both guys worked hard.

\*\*3/4

7. Harris Twins d. Mamalukes to win the WCW Tag Team Titles. Heavy D fell down executing a kick, which did not bode well for the rest of this match. Vito did the People's Stomp to no reaction whatsoever. I have not yet figured out why he's "Big" Vito, since he was the smallest guy in the ring here. Mamalukes did a poor man's H-Bomb, which is pretty hard to do since the real H-Bomb is ridiculously lame. This match was really long and really boring. Vito finally made the coldest hot tag of the year and ran wild. Disco ran in and hit Vito with the belt but the referee didn't call for a DQ. Ron then grabbed the belt, hit each of the Mamalukes, and then helped Heavy D hit the H-Bomb on Vito for the win. 1/2\*

8. Dustin Rhodes beat Terry Funk in a bullrope match. When this match was over, I still had no idea what the rules were other than that a bullrope was involved. Funk came out with a frozen chicken. As he was taunting Rhodes, some man dressed up in a chicken outfit ran in out of the crowd. There had been rumors on the Internet that Gobbledygooker had jumped ship recently. The chicken taunted Dustin as clucking noises played over the PA. I'm not making this up. Dustin ran after the chicken and Funk cut him off with a frozen chicken to the head. During the match, Dustin bulldogged Funk onto a bell and Tony said Funk got busted open. It was particularly funny since Funk wasn't bleeding and didn't bleed at any time during the match. Funk took over, grabbed the mic, and said the match was now an "I Quit" match. The referee said it was pinfall only. Funk said — and this is a direct quote — "You're full of shit!" and punched out the referee. Funk forced Dustin to say "I quit". The referee then came to and said the match must continue. Somewhere in here, the Gobbledygooker ran in again. Dustin finally piledrove Funk on the bell for the pin. After the match, Funk chased Dustin away to ensure that this feud really will never die. \*\*

9. Sting beat Lex Luger in a lumberjack cast match. Doug Dillinger, Fit Finley, Vampiro, Jimmy Hart, Curt Hennig and Knobs all came out wearing casts to be lumberjacks. Luger came out and apologized to everyone for breaking their arms. He then called out his lumberjacks. Harlem Eat, Hugh Morris and the Twins came out wearing casts. All I've got to say about this match is that Sting used an ear clap at one point. Tank Abbott came out midway through and knocked out Dillinger with a punch to the collarbone. Yes, his career is on the rise. The lumberjacks were supposed to brawl backstage, but they only beat on each other for about four seconds and then all started running separately through the curtain. It was the weirdest thing I've ever seen. Vamp stayed at ringside. Flair and Liz came out but Vamp attacked Flair. Liz hit Sting with the bat but Vamp took it away from her. Jimmy Hart then used a weight belt to kidnap Liz. Luger put Sting in the rack but Vamp hit him with the bat. Sting then hit the Death Drop for the pin. Sting and Vamp hugged afterwards so Vamp got the big rub. That was the only thing of value in this match. 1/4\*

Gene interviewed Tank backstage, who rambled about Doug Dillinger trying to take his money.

They announced that the order of the matches had changed. so the World Title bout was going on next.

10. Sid beat Jeff Jarrett to retain the WCW Heavyweight Title. They brawled into the crowd early. Harris Twins ran out and attacked Sid behind the referee's back. Jarrett applied a long sleeper. There was a good nearfall after one of the Twins accidentally hit Jarrett with the belt. Referee took a bump and Jarrett used the guitar. NWO referee Mark Johnson ran out to make the cover, but Hogan made the save. Hogan destroyed Jarrett and gave him a Big Boot and Legdrop of Doom. Sid got the pin when the referee woke up. Pretty bad, but Jarrett did about as good a job as possible. \*3/4

After the match, Scott Steiner ran in and hit Hogan with a guitar. Tony noted that he hadn't seen Steiner "all day". That's nice, but we haven't seen him for a month. Flair ran down and attacked Hogan, which led right into the main event.

11. Hulk Hogan beat Ric Flair in a strap match. The usual from these two, just slower. Flair tried hard but Hogan is totally unsalvageable. Luger came out when they were brawling on the ramp and hit Hogan with a stiff chairshot to the head. Hogan looked groggy for awhile there. We went over the finish earlier in this report. Match wasn't horrible, but both guys are well over 40 and this is the kind of main event that helps dig the hole even deeper for WCW. \*\*1/4

## Ratings

I guess the big news this week is that Raw scored its usual rating despite putting on one of the best shows ever and giving away the original WrestleMania main event for free. Raw drew a 6.20 rating off hourly numbers of 6.04 and 6.32. Nitro scored a 2.53 rating off hourly numbers of 3.02 and 2.14. At least Nitro broke a 3.0 unopposed this week. They also beat Walker: Texas Ranger, so there will be high-fives in the office for sure. Raw's overrun featuring Rock vs. Hunter vs. Show drew a 7.3 rating, which is up just one tenth from last week. Some might suggest that this is bad news for WrestleMania, but the fact is that a million people will probably buy that show no matter what the main event ends up being just because it's tradition. Nitro's low-point saw Barbarian vs. Tank draw an abysmal 1.7.

Other ratings notes: Thunder drew a 2.0, Smackdown drew a 4.8, and ECW on TNN drew an 0.8, its lowest number of the year. My guess is that all the drunken ECW yahoo fans were out partying for St. Patrick's Day. The episode of Third Rock that Chyna was on drew a 5.9 rating, down from the show's 6.6 average. Hopefully that means Michael Cole will never say she "Third Rocked" someone again.

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## WWF News and Notes

- Steve Regal is working in Memphis helping to teach the younger guys some of the subtleties that Jim Neidhart isn't likely to show them. In fact, when Regal first arrived, Neidhart was teaching the guys how to get in and out of the ring (really). Regal, who is 31, has taken care of his personal problems and feels as if the WWF has given him a brand new start. The rumors of him being deported if he doesn't find work are not true, since he's a US citizen, although he has stated that if he didn't get work here he'd probably move back to England. He is willing to stay in Memphis and work until the WWF has a spot open for him.

- Neither Steve Austin or Undertaker are expected back for WrestleMania, although both will be appearing at the Fan Festival along with Shawn Michaels. The plan is not to bring Austin back until he's able to do something physical in the ring. He is said to still be rather self-conscious about his body, which is another reason he's not coming back yet. Right now, WWF is hoping he'll be ready by the April pay-per-view.

- Vince McMahon gave a long audio interview to WWF.com discussing Beyond the Mat. Vince's timeline was all screwed up and he obviously came ill-prepared since he changed his story on a couple of different occasions. The main gist of the interview was that he wasn't supporting the movie because he wasn't making any money off of it. He said he was told that it would be just a small art house film and that it ended up a big-time profitable theatrical release. He was bitter that the film featured many of his performers yet none of them were getting a cut of the revenue. He said that the tagline ("The movie Vince McMahon doesn't want you to see") was misleading and that he didn't care if everyone in the whole country saw the movie. He said he didn't have the power to ask UPN or USA to ban all advertising for the film. If that's the case, how did the ads end up being banned after both networks had already signed contracts and agreed to air them?

- Barry Blaustein, Mick Foley, Hulk Hogan and Roddy Piper were on the Larry King Live show hyping up the movie last week. Everyone claimed to have seen the movie and enjoyed it, although Hogan hesitated when saying so and I don't personally believe him. Regardless, he came off as the second biggest jackass of the bunch, the first being King himself. King did so little preparation that he didn't even know who Ric Flair was when they showed video clips of his match with Hogan and Luger at Thunder. King also didn't have any follow-up questions prepared because he was totally clueless about the business. Piper was much more well-behaved than I expected and came off, with his talk of drugs and despair, as a guy who was trying to get a big-money book deal for an expose on the wrestling business. Foley and Blaustein were just nice guys who probably didn't assert themselves enough in certain situations. Hogan was his usual Yellow Bastard self totally dominating much of the conversation and doing his best to be perceived as the top guy in the business today. King, who was clueless, went right along with it and by the end, Hogan and Piper probably seemed to the casual fan to be the bigger stars while Foley, who is the real biggest modern star of the three, looked like a young guy with a just a few years in the business. Hogan manipulated the conversation into a talk about money, and when Foley revealed that he made over a million dollars last year, Hogan made him look like an amateur by smugly stating that he personally had "a different deal". They had some totally embarrassing backstage footage from WCW of Hogan showing off his vast



array of debilitating injuries as Foley, who has had more injuries than both guys put together, sat quietly in the background. Foley might actually have done the business a disservice by talking about all the hell he'd put his body through with various risks, but saying he turned out great in the end. King finished the show hyping up the "brutal strap match" at Uncensored which Hogan claimed would leave his body drenched in blood. Despite all the shenanigans by Hogan, the show did a good job hyping up the film.

- I saw the movie this weekend and I enjoyed it, although I wasn't blown away by it. It is a very honest look at what pro-wrestling really is, although I liked *Wrestling With Shadows* better. I noticed a major theme running through both films which I think is a major reason people liked them so much, and it's not just the behind-the-scenes footage of WWF. Both movies showed that no matter how many people are watching, no matter how much money the business is making and no matter how "modern" wrestling has become, at its core it is still the carnival. There are freak show acts, ruthless promoters, fat guys, giants, midgets, women, drugs, life on the road, no money at the local level, extravagant hype, self-mutilation, oddities from around the world, clowns, and a show that every child wants to run away and be a part of. Everyone said the movie was dark, but one of my main complaints is that it might not have been dark enough. They showed the horrors of wrestling, the toll it takes on the body and the family, and the screwed up people it creates, yet at the end, Barry Blaustein basically said he still loved it and thought it was great. I can understand having wrestling "in your blood", and having the love to perform and create great stories for thousands of people, but this may be the most f'd up business on the planet and I have a hard time actually loving it. In a way, this movie had the happier ending of the two. In *Beyond the Mat*, the business was exposed for what it really is, but in the end the moral was that despite all the pain and suffering, everything is OK. *Wrestling With Shadows* ended with Bret Hart, screwed by Vince McMahon after working for him for over a decade, walking up a hill with his father who could barely stand upright due to years of punishment. The moral was that despite all the good that can come from this business, from entertaining fans to making big money as a World Champion, when all is said and done you'll probably end up fucked over one way or another. And that truly is what pro-wrestling is all about.

- The movie did \$950,000 the first weekend, or \$3,188 per screen, which *Variety* reports is "decent". The movie should open in additional theatres around the nation at the end of March.

- The *Ross Report* this week said that more chapters were going to be added to the Foley and Rock books once they were released in paperback. He plugged Shawn Michaels' wrestling school and the trainees that signed developmental deals. He plugged ECW and their last PPV. He said WWF already had some interesting post-WrestleMania storylines planned. If you are a member of management in WCW, note that WWF does long-term planning. Please begin some in WCW immediately. Ross also said he wasn't told what to think about *Beyond the Mat*. He said he saw the movie twice and found it "dark, but not uninteresting".

- Rock, Big Show, Vince McMahon, Mick Foley and Hunter Hearst Helmsely appeared on *Saturday Night Live* last week. They all did a very good job although Foley was totally

underutilized. I guess that is to be expected since Rock was host. Big Show displayed more charisma in thirty seconds on this show than he has during his entire career put together. Hunter was pretty much in character as the WWF Champion and seems to have the mindset that he's a professional wrestler 24 hours a day. Vince was his usual over-the-top self and it translated well to a comedy show. Rock was involved in almost every skit on the show and most of them were pretty funny. He even sang a duet ("Are You Lonesome Tonight") with Foley and Show that was disturbingly good (well, Rock was good, the other two couldn't sing to save their lives, but that was part of the joke). One thing I hate about Saturday Night Live is their tendency to parody stupid people. We all see stupid people every day on the street, driving cars, waiting in line at the supermarket, delivering our mail, etc. When SNL parodies stupid people, they do so by having their performers act even more annoying and obnoxious than a real-life stupid person. Instead of laughing, I get enraged. Maybe I'm the only one. The show drew an 8.3 and 21 share, the highest of the season thus far.

## WWF On Television

WWF Smackdown (March 16 — Taped March 14): Show and Shane came down to the ring. Show looks trimmer than ever. Shane said Show was still going to WrestleMania, which got no pop whatsoever. Shane said Rock never said he'd replace Show, just that he'd go to Mania if he beat him. The crowd booed the announcement of a Triple Threat match. HHH and Stephanie came out. Helmsely said he was pissed because this match meant he could lose the belt without getting pinned. He was so pissed that he accepted the match. Stephanie said she would be in Triple H's corner because she had just as much power as Shane. I could have sworn Vince and Shane won 100% ownership in that ladder match last year. Vince came out and said Shane and Steph were embarrassing everyone, which is why he decided to come back. He said he'd be in Rock's corner at Mania. Shane signed Rock vs. Kane, Steph signed Show vs. Rikishi, and Vince signed HHH vs. Godfather. Segment ended with Vince suggesting Steph could become part of the Ho Train. So much for Vince not exploiting his own daughter for ratings... Dudleys d. Edge & Christian. Terri threw a chair into the ring for the Dudleys, but they didn't use it. As she was heading up the ramp after the match, Hardy grabbed her and threw her back into the ring. Edge speared her to death. Christian looked concerned for a moment, but left with Edge anyway. Poor Terri... Godfather d. HHH in a non-title match with help from Shane. This really happened. They couldn't give Chris Motherfucking Benoit a non-title win over Helmsely on his first day in but they'd give one to the washed-up piece of shit Godfather. God, did this ever piss me off... Thankfully, two great commercials aired at this point. The first was the one with the big hairy bikers singing a Barry White song to a Yamaha motorcycle. The second one was the AM/PM commercial where the guy walks in and buys a hot dog. THAT was an awesome commercial although I might be the only person in the whole world who thought so... Acolytes d. Head Cheese. Yawn... Rikishi d. Show with help from HHH. Lots of ass in this match. Too Cool & Rikishi danced afterwards... Bob Backlund and Kurt Angle came out. Backlund is so white that he makes Alex Wright look like Hulk Hogan in late summer. Jericho & Tazz beat Backlund & Angle—DQ when Radicals ran in. Benoit gave Angle a diving headbutt after the match... Crash Holly d. Headbangers in a Hardcore match at Fun Time USA. Was this ever fun. Some of the stuff was funny only if you really paid attention. For example, when they found Crash he was

playing that game where you hit the hippo with a mallet, which is a game for three-year-olds. Crash went down a huge-ass slide at one point and the cameraman followed him. This was WAY too entertaining... DX locked Kane in a truck backstage. Vince, instead of ordering someone to get Kane out of the truck, ordered X-Pac to replace Kane against Rock... Malenko d. Brian Christopher with help from Eddy. Too Cool destroyed the bad guys afterwards. Somewhere in here, Chyna ran out and gave Eddy a DDT. Cole said Chyna "Third Rocked" him. Cole, if you're reading this, please never say that again... Benoit & Saturn NC Hardy. This was plain awesome while it lasted. Since nobody won, I guess they'll have a rematch since this was for the number-one contender's spot. No complaints from me... Apparently, Edge & Christian lost their number-one contender's spot at WrestleMania after losing to Dudleys on this show... X-Pac d. Rock—DQ when Kane ran in. Rock, Show and Helmsely brawled as the show ended. Not nearly the heat you'd expect with the three guys in the Mania main event going at it. Decent show.

Raw is War (March 20 — Live): Michael Cole interviewed Vince McMahon. Vince talked about a tag tournament later (winning teams went to battle royal with winners getting title shot at WrestleMania) and a special surprise that would "rock the WWF to its core"... DX came out to new entrance music courtesy of Run DMC. Hardy beat X-Pac & Road Dogg in a tournament match. Incredible heat for the wrestling, which was great to see. Kane came out and went after X-Pac. Tori tried to stop him and Kane gave her a chokeslam in the ring for her troubles... HHH and Stephanie came down to the ring. They called out Vince. Show and Shane came out instead. Shane wanted a Triple H vs. Show match for the WWF Title later. Hunter said no. Vince then came out and signed Hunter vs. Rock vs. Show in the main event for the belt. You read that right, the WrestleMania main event on free TV. Hunter said OK, but said if the match happened there would be no rematch at WrestleMania. Vince agreed... Bossman NC Godfather. Match never started as Bossman and Bull Buchanan just beat up Godfather and left him laying. Best Godfather match ever... X-Pac and Road Dogg stormed into HHH's office backstage and demanded he do something about Kane. HHH signed Kane vs. Rikishi, which for some reason appeased them... Too Cool d. Saturn & Malenko in another good tourney match with awesome heat. Eddy broke up the worm and the crowd reacted like they were going to riot... Kane d. Rikishi—DQ when DX ran in. Rikishi ran wild afterwards but DX beat him up. This set up Kane & Rikishi vs. Dogg & X-Pac for Mania... Rock cut a promo backstage and said he didn't care what the main event was... Jericho d. Benoit with help from Kurt Angle in an awesome match. Best Raw match in awhile. Backlund ran down afterwards and helped Angle stomp a mudhole in Benoit and Jericho setting up a three-way at WrestleMania... Head Cheese d. Hollys in another tourney match. Shockingly, the crowd wasn't into this match as much as they were some of the others. Tazz came out and chased Crash away since Crash said he'd defend his Hardcore belt 24 hours a day. Bob was left alone and got pinned... GTV is back. It caught Terri making fun of Miss Kitty for not being on TV anymore. Miss Kitty has black hair again this week... Christian & Edge d. Acolytes in another tourney match. Some missed spots here. Midian accidentally hit Bradshaw with a broom leading to the pin. Acolytes killed Midian afterwards. Nobody was paying attention to this match due to a flasher in the crowd... Test d. Val Venis. Test was way off on much of what he did. Prince Albert ran down afterwards and helped Test destroy Venis. Trish Stratus, who had come out as Test's manager, cut a bad promo and said she was forming T&A;

with Test and Albert. It's a good thing she's hotter than hell because this promo was really bad... Clips of Rock, Foley, Show, Hunter and Vince on Saturday Night Live aired. So much for kayfabe... The Tag Team Battle Royal to determine the number one contenders came down to Edge & Christian and Hardy. Dudleys ran in at this point and killed everyone, so there was no winner. This will lead to a three-way at Mania. Dudleys superbombed Jeff through Christian and a table afterwards... Hunter beat Rock and Show in the main event. Match was pretty good and had great heat. Finish saw Shane foil the People's Elbow and knock out Rock with a chair. Hunter then grabbed another chair and nailed Vince and Show. He hit the Pedigree on Show for the pinfall. After the match, Rock chased Shane away through the crowd. Linda McMahon then came out on the ramp. A fan jumped the rail and went after her, but Hunter totally wiped him out. That was cool. Linda said that Hunter was right, there wouldn't be a three-way rematch at WrestleMania. She said it would be a four-way allowing someone to realize his dream. She announced Rock vs. Hunter vs. Show vs. Mick Foley in an elimination match. Foley came out to a SUPER pop. He laid out Hunter and Giant as the show ended. Overall, a fantastic edition of Raw leading to WrestleMania.

#### WWF On Tour

Cedar Falls, IA (March 18): Edge d. Prince Albert, Crash Holly d. Christian, Dudleys d. Hardy, Rikishi d. Big Bossman, Jackie d. Lita, Kurt Angle d. Chris Benoit and Chris Jericho in a three-way, Too Cool d. Headbangers, Kane d. X-Pac.

Moline, AL (March 19): Edge d. Prince Albert, Crash Holly d. Christian, Jackie d. Lita, Too Cool d. Headbangers, Phatu d. Big Bossman, Tazz d. Gangrel, Kurt Angle d. Chris Jericho and Chris Benoit, Dudleys d. Hardy, Kane d. X-Pac.

#### WCW News and Notes

- Hulk Hogan and Sting were both served in the South Florida murder case we talked about last week involving the 12-year-old who killed his six-year-old playmate. Sting and Hogan were served at the PPV since they were in Florida. Rock was also served a second time through his wife. The feeling now is that the wrestlers are being called in just for the publicity factor, since the prosecution wants Sting, Hogan and Rock to demonstrate how wrestlers do moves without really hurting each other, yet the 12-year-old has already stated that he knew wrestling was "fake". In other words there is no point to having the wrestlers there at all. Rock still hasn't gotten out of his subpoena.

- Lex Luger and Elizabeth were involved in a car accident last Tuesday when a bus slammed into their rental car. Both were fine and worked the Thunder show later that evening. WCW never bothered to explain the situation and put over how tough both were for still working the show.

- Dog was toned down after a post-Nitro meeting Monday. Amazingly, management realized what an embarrassing and ridiculous character it was.

- Dallas Page had his pay cut in half after missing six shows due to his herniated discs. There is some talk that Kevin Nash may have had his pay cut as well, although not many of the other wrestlers believe that one. There was heat beginning when Bret Hart announced his pay cut to the boys in England, since Goldberg has been out for months and is still getting his regular paychecks. The feeling is that the “mandatory” pay cut is only mandatory depending on where you stand on the totem pole. There are several schools of thought about what these pay cuts will accomplish. Management just wants to save money and probably feels that wrestlers will be less likely to milk injuries if they know they’re getting a pay cut. Almost every wrestler feels that getting a pay cut after being hurt on the job is a total insult and will either result in guys putting in less effort to avoid injury or cause guys to get hooked on pain pills so they can keep working when injured. It’s unlikely management is going to give in, although Page has talked about contesting his cut.

- Speaking of Goldberg, he won’t be back until May. They were shooting for an April return, but he just now started getting back into the gym and he wants to get his previous body back before returning to TV. He lost 27 pounds during his down time. In the next few weeks he’s scheduled to do cover shots for Sports Illustrated for Kids, DirecTV on Sports and Muscular Development magazine. He will also be attending the Hollywood premiere of Ready to Rumble on April 5th and be a presenter at the Kid’s Choice Awards on April 14th.

- Hulk Hogan still has creative control, which is why a lot of the stuff involving him has sucked so much lately. Last week, Hogan refused to do an angle where Flair and Luger got the better of him to build interest in the strap match at the PPV. Hogan beat them up on Nitro, he beat them up on Thunder (at the same time, I might add) and then beat them up at the PPV. He also continues to go on radio shows and claim he had to come back because the younger guys couldn’t hang. Hogan is like a huge shovel that keeps digging the hole deeper and deeper for WCW, and there is little they seem to be willing to do about it. Meanwhile, Hogan has repeatedly put over Vince McMahon during recent radio appearances around the country, and it’s no secret he’d love to go back to work for the WWF as soon as he gets the chance.

- Speaking of Hogan, he appeared on WJRR radio in Orlando Tuesday. He said Sid was jealous which was why he turned on him at Nitro. Hogan said a lot of guys in the company were injured including Bret Hart and Dallas Page. Hogan said Bret was up in Canada and couldn’t even remember what “WCW” stood for. That’s nice. Bret has a potentially career-ending concussion and Hogan is on the radio joking about it. Hogan also said Dallas Page had a “broken fingernail”. Hogan said they needed guys willing to work through the pain. Yes, this business needs more guys addicted to pain pills. Hogan said Kidman needed to train like Torrie in the weight room. At least he put over Torrie. Hogan also said that Vampiro had a chance of getting over as a top guy soon.

- I am still amazed that the main angle in WCW is that Hogan is a self-serving egotistical jackass and Sid finally had enough and beat him up. And the best part is, HOGAN IS THE FACE IN THIS FEUD. Hogan is smarter than everyone in wrestling put together.

- Bret's column this week heaped praise on Mick Foley. Bret had an interesting comment saying that while Mick was reckless, he was always careful with his opponents. Bret taped Off the Record last week and noted that he didn't hold any ill will towards Goldberg for kicking him in the head and potentially ending his career at Starrcade. However, he has done a couple of other radio appearances in Canada and expressed some bitterness about the kick, saying Goldberg wasn't looking where he was kicking. I just found it interesting because Bret often writes things that can only be understood if you read between the lines.

## WCW On Television

Wednesday Thunder (March 15 — Taped March 14): Dandy and Silver King came out before their match and demanded to be introduced as Los Fabulosos. They lost to Chavo Guerrero Jr. & La Parka in a really good match. WHOO-HOO! More racial discrimination lawsuits please. Miss Hancock met with Fabulosos backstage and said she was going to take them clothes shopping. You know, because Mexicans are too stupid to buy nice clothes for themselves... Flair, Liz and Luger came out. Liz and Luger deserve credit since they were involved in a legit car accident earlier in the day. Luger made fun of Sting. Flair looked in the rafters for Sting, which is an indication that he'll probably be coming from the rafters again soon. Flair ran down Hogan, which prompted Jimmy Hart to come out. Hart said Hogan was more important than Flair because Larry King was backstage ready to interview him. Actually, Flair was asked to be on that show as well. Jimmy worked them into a frenzy and they finally beat the s' out of him. Security made the save. This was actually a pretty cool segment thanks to Flair and Jimmy... Hogan arrived and got pissed when he saw the state Jimmy was in. He demanded a match with Team Package... Psicosis d. Kaz Hayashi in a good short match. Artist ran in afterwards and hit Psicosis with his jumping DDT. Psicosis is the only man in the world capable of taking that move correctly, yet Artist does it every week on TV... Bigelow was shown talking to Oklahoma backstage. I guess he wants into the women's division... Tank beat Buzzkill in under a minute. Meng watched on a monitor backstage. I am such a mark for Meng. Even this match was OK because Tank's punch looked like it hit for the first time ever in WCW and Buzzkill sold it like a mofo... Wall attacked David Flair and dragged him onto a balcony. He threatened to chokeslam David literally to his death, since this was a legit 30-foot drop. Crowd popped big for the attempted murder. Bigelow made the save and bodyslammed Wall through a table... Backstage, Booker told Kidman to watch his back. Kidman was macking on Torrie and not paying any attention... Jarrett d. Booker with the stroke in another very good match. Some cool false finishes. Twins gave Booker an H-Bomb behind the referee's back leading to the finish. Sid made the save for Booker after the match... Dustin cut a promo backstage and said he was the "American Nightmare". He may be right. He said he was going to make Kidman "bite the Dust" later. He really said these things... Backstage, Booker yelled at Kidman for not watching his back during his match earlier... Vampiro d. Hugh Morris in yet ANOTHER good match. I know this sounds unbelievable. Both guys looked great here and the crowd was really into it... Dog & Knobs d. Demon & Norman Smiley. Even this was OK. Dog was way toned down after the meeting Monday. Rave and Lane attacked Demon and Smiley leading to the finish... Dustin beat Kidman in two-and-a-half minutes. Totally sucks to be Kidman, except for the Torrie part. Booker

came out to make the save but Torrie was groping and macking on Kidman. Booker was disgusted at the sight and left. I was disgusted too... Hogan NC Flair and Luger when Hogan just chased Flair away and his music played. Match was nowhere NEAR as bad as I'd been led to believe, although that is not to say it was any good. Flair worked hard but had to sell for some of the most horrible offense ever seen on national TV. Tenay tried hard to put over Uncensored as a must-see, but it was a lost cause.

WCW Monday Nitro (March 20 — Live): Sid arrived at the arena in street clothes wearing the World Title belt. What a mark... Gene interviewed Sid. He called Jarrett a pig and then went off on this analogy about bringing a pig wearing a ribbon into your kitchen. Jarrett came out and blamed his loss at Uncensored on Hogan. He suggested Sid & Hogan vs. himself & Scott Steiner in the main event with the stipulation being that if Sid pinned him, he'd never get another title shot, but if he pinned Sid he got a rematch. Hogan came out and agreed to be Sid's partner after Sid literally got on his knees and begged. That was so sickening... Gene interviewed Chavo, who stole his wallet. Chavo said he couldn't believe he wasn't in the Cruiserweight Title tournament. I am almost positive that he was, but I'm not going back to check... Chris Candido d. Lash Laroux in a solid wrestling match with some decent heat. Candido is a good worker but he's robotic and has no facials. He mentioned at one point that he didn't have a skank valet... Miss Hancock told Lane and Rave that she was going to bring Los Fabulosos to Thunder. Lane and Rave acted like they'd never heard of these guys before, even though they were on Thunder last week. So WCW expects us to watch Thunder even though they're doing angles where their own wrestlers don't watch the show... Fit Finley beat La Parka. Finish just came out of nowhere. Pretty good while it lasted... Gene interviewed David Flair. David ripped off his neckbrace and called out Wall. Wall came out and killed him. Daphne tried to make the save with a fire extinguisher, but Wall no-sold it and chokeslammed David off the apron through a table... Booker & Kidman d. Harris Twins—DQ. Tip to WCW: When Torrie comes down to the ring with Kidman in her skimpy outfits, please refrain from cutting away to your lame-ass video packages. And you idiots wonder why the ratings are so low. They're heavily teasing that Torrie is going to leave Kidman for Booker... Mamalukes yelled at Disco backstage and said they were going to go take care of business. They never appeared on the show again... Lex Luger d. Vampiro with help from Flair. Sting ran down to make the save. Vamp desperately needs to beat either Flair or Luger clean to bust through to the top level. Putting him with Sting helps, but he needs that one big win... Clips of Sid at a press conference aired. He was happily answering questions when Hogan walked in and started taking over. Sid was FANTASTIC here. As the Yellow Bastard was yapping away, Sid just stood there still smiling like it was no big deal, but he had that smile that you could tell was a fake smile and he was boiling inside. It was the best work Sid has ever done in his life. It was so good that I was begging for him to stomp Hogan's ass into the dirt... Hugh Morris d. Norman Smiley. They started playing Demon's music for his run-in before the match was even over. Hugh killed Demon too... Curt Hennig d. Dustin Rhodes—DQ. Dustin took off Hennig's cast, so the referee called for the bell. Hogan ran down to make the save. I hate that guy... Gene interviewed Sid. Jimmy Hart walked by and Sid told him to make sure nobody interfered in the main event. It's funny, because WCW often books cage matches in a storyline attempt to make sure nobody interferes, and it never works. Yet Sid tells Jimmy Hart to make sure nobody interferes, and by God, nobody interferes. That Jimmy

Hart must be a badass... Tank d. Barbarian. Horrible. Tank was even running the ropes at one point. Note to WCW: There are no ropes in UFC, and if there were, guys would not be running them... Sting d. Ric Flair—DQ when Luger ran in. Flair can still work like an absolute mother, and this was the best match on the show. Vamp made the save for Sting afterwards... Sid & Hulk Hogan both beat and lost to Scott Steiner & Jeff Jarrett. You see, Hogan was stealing the spotlight again so Sid went mad and chokeslammed him. Then — and this is sheer booking genius — Sid pinned Hogan despite the fact that he was his tag team partner. Only in WCW. Decent show overall despite the absurd finish in the main event.

#### ECW On Television

ECW on TNN (March 17 — Taped): Impact Players d. Nova & Chetti. I missed the beginning of this but it seemed OK while it lasted... Joey and Gertner opened up the show... Rob Van Dam had a chat with Super Crazy backstage. He congratulated him, but reiterated that Crazy was carrying HIS TV Title and that he'd be coming back for it within "a few weeks"... Sandman d. Angel. Exactly what you'd expect with those two in there... Cyrus cut a promo with Rhino backstage. He said he had the power to cancel the show at anytime. He said he'd killed territories before and he'd kill them again. Now THAT was a funny line. Rhino threatened to beat up everyone... Corino came out apparently to cut a promo, but was told by the referee that he had a match. Corino had no clue. This is something I would expect from WCW. New Jack came out and beat the living stuff out of Corino. He did his crazy dive off a balcony onto Jack Victory. Yes, this was taped before the PPV. Finally, Rhino ran in and speared Jack to death, giving Corino the win... Raven cut a promo with Francine backstage... Mike Awesome faced Masato Tanaka. The referee checked both guys for foreign objects, and as soon as the bell rang Awesome went for a chair. That was really funny for some reason. Tanaka had the pin after a rolling elbow at one point, but the referee was distracted. Raven then ran in and destroyed Tanaka. I guess this went to a no-contest since there was no bell. Awesome gave Tanaka a scary powerbomb over the top rope through a table. Dreamer ran in to make the save but got his ass kicked as well. Overall, a decent show saved by the main event.

#### ECW On Tour

Worcester, MA (March 17): Tom Marquez d. Chilly Willy, Little Guido d. Kid Kash, Raven d. Mikey Whipwreck, CW Anderson & Bill Wiles d. Danny Doring & Roadkill, Balls Mahoney d. Vic Grimes, Impact Players d. Nova & Chetti, Mike Awesome d. Angel, Yoshihiro Tajiri d. Tommy Dreamer, Super Crazy d. Rhino.

Salem, NH (March 18 — TNN Tapings): HC Loc d. Chilly Willie, Nova & Chris Chetti d. Mikey Whipwreck & Simon Diamond, Little Guido d. Kid Kash, Danny Doring & Roadkill & Dusty Rhodes d. Eric Watts & Bill Wiles & CW Anderson, Super Crazy d. Yoshihiro Tajiri, Rhino d. Balls Mahoney, Tommy Dreamer d. Vic Grimes, Impact Players d. Raven & Mike Awesome.

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